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Information Resource Center

Article Alert

No.6, June 2005

Published by the Information Resource Center, U.S. Embassy Jakarta

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DEMOCRACY & HUMAN RIGHTS

1. FACING THE PERILS OF PRESIDENTIALISM?

By Francis Fukuyama, Björn Dressel, Boo-Seung Chang.
Journal of Democracy. April 2005. Vol. 16, Iss. 2; pp. 102-117.

Juan Linz's classic article laid out 4 major perils of presidentialism in the context of Latin American experience, which unleashed a flood of scholarship about the topic. Very little of the literature, however, has taken account of recent developments in East Asia, where the majority of new democracies have presidential systems. Here, Fukuyama et al consider the developments in the Philippines, Indonesia, South Korea, and Taiwan, and explore to what extent Linz's critique and prediction have been borne out in East Asia.

2. AMERICAN MAXIMALISM

By Stephen Sestanovich. *The National Interest*. Spring 2005, Iss. 79; pg. 13-24.

American foreign policy of the past four years has been based on radical views about how the United States should conduct itself in the world. Sestanovich highlights American Maximalism as advancing national interests by overturning a deteriorating status quo that is not revolutionary. Understanding American maximalist tradition clarifies much about the current predicament of American policy that might otherwise remain mysterious. The author suggests that the virulent European response to the diplomacy of the Bush Administration may be the result not only of its shocking novelty, but also of its familiarity.

3. THE CASE FOR BIG GOVERNMENT

American Prospect. Vol. 16, No. 5, May 2005, pp. A1-A23

For more than two decades, conservatives have engaged in a non-stop assault on government, and liberals have fired back only sporadically. In this special section, a number of authors unapologetically argue for the benefits of government. In "The Price of a Free Society," Paul Starr notes that liberty, security and prosperity require an effective government. In "Ownership and Government," Robert Kuttner writes that "the great American middle class is the fruit of social investment", and that the "ownership society" touted by conservatives is merely transferring -

hazards back to individuals at a time when the public is already bearing increased risks. Jacob Hacker argues in "Bigger and Better" that social-insurance programs have never worked well without government support and regulation. Geoffrey Nunberg writes in "Thinking about the Government" that "maybe it's time to remind voters what government does well." In "The Vanishing State?", Robert Reich believes that the government's shrinking role in regulating capitalism does not have to be the inevitable result of a globalized economy. Merrill Goozner writes in "Can We Housebreak Capitalism?" that the public values safe products, a clean environment and transparent markets -- all the result of government regulation. In "The Non-Nuclear Option," Jack Shonkoff notes that investment in early-childhood well-being has few rivals for long-term societal payback. Michael Lipsky and Dianne Stewart write in "Under the Radar" that the conservative anti-government movement has begun attacking state and local governments, which carry out much of the vital services used on a daily basis by the public.

4. CIVIL MILITARY RELATIONS: THE POSTMODERN DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE

By Gregory D Foster. *World Affairs*. Winter 2005. Vol. 167, Iss. 3; pp. 91-101.

Civil-military relations have become an object of universal concern in the post-modern world in which people live. What militaries do and look like, where they properly fit in the societies of which they are a part, and how they are used and kept in check are enduring concerns that have acquired new life, form, and meaning in an age that is materially different from the modern past. Foster discusses further civil-military relations.

ECONOMIC SECURITY AND TRADE

5. THE CASE FOR FLAT TAXES?

Economist. Vol. 375, No. 8422, April 16, 2005, pp. 59-61

While the United States talks about flat taxes, some countries are already doing it. In 1994, Estonia became the first European country to introduce a flat tax, followed by Latvia, Lithuania and others. Russia overhauled its tax system in 2001, collapsing three tax brackets into one uniform 13 percent rate. After one year, the article notes, Russia's revenues showed -

an increase of 26 percent, partly due to increased income, but significantly attributable to a conspicuous increase in compliance with tax authorities. In the year before Russia moved to the flat tax, Russians in the highest two tax brackets reported only 52 percent of their income -- after the flat tax, this same group reported 68 percent of their income. This suggests that the principal virtue of the flat tax may be that its simplicity encourages compliance.

6. SHOULD THE CEO BE THE CHAIRMAN?

By Jay W. Lorsch and Andy Zelleke. MIT Sloan Management Review. Vol. 46, No. 2, Winter 2005, pp. 71-74

Recent U.S. corporate scandals have shaken people out of their complacency regarding corporate governance, write Lorsch and Zelleke, but a knee-jerk reaction to adopt the British model of company leadership -- which separates the CEO from the chairman of the board -- without understanding its complexities is not the answer. The British model can lead to confusion about who is really in charge and power struggles, they say. Conversely, the authors explain, the U.S. model -- in which the CEO is also the chairman -- precludes any confusion as to who is really in charge. There are pros and cons to each model, they note, but for most large U.S. companies, adding a competent lead director to the board -- with clearly defined limited responsibilities -- will likely strike the right balance between effective governance and leadership. Boards that do choose to split the chairman and CEO jobs should not ignore lessons from the U.K. experiences, they write.

GLOBAL ISSUES

7. STUDYING THE RHYTHM OF THE HEALTHY HEART

By Corey Kilgannon. San Diego Union-Tribune, November 24, 2004, pp. 16-19

Milton Graves, 63, is a talented jazz drummer who made his mark in the 1960s, but after years of hard living as a musician, began studying and teaching holistic healing, and became interested in the effects of music on physiological function. Curious about the heartbeat as a source of musical rhythm, he created computer programs to analyze the heart's rhythms and pitches, and realized that he was able to detect faulty heartbeats, and maybe even correct them through biofeedback. His work earned him a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation in 2000 to buy equipment. Dr. Baruch Krauss, who teaches pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and is an emergency physician at Boston Children's Hospital, says that the medical establishment has only recently begun to appreciate the rhythmic importance of the heartbeat. Says Krauss, "this is what a Renaissance man looks like today ... Milford is right on the cutting edge of this stuff. He brings to it what doctors can't, because he approaches it as a musician."

8. THINK AGAIN: AIDS

By Tina Rosenberg. Foreign Policy, No. 147, March/April 2005, pp. 22-24, 26-27

Rosenberg, an editorial writer for the New York Times, reviews the status of the fight against the AIDS epidemic by addressing what she terms misperceptions about the battle. Among these

are: recognition of the severity of the disease, funding, effectiveness of drug regimens, treatment and risky behaviors, status of the disease in socially conservative nations, differences in the disease in Asia and Africa, and the role of poverty. She concludes, "The grace for China, India, Russia, and other countries poised on the edge of today's epidemics is that the world is realizing that the prevention of millions of deaths is wholly within its power."

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

9. THE GUARD AND RESERVE IN AMERICA'S NEW MISSIONS

By Frank G. Hoffman. ORBIS, Vol. 49, No. 2, Spring 2005, pp. 213-228

LtCol Hoffman, USMC Reserve (ret.), a Research Fellow at the U.S. Marine Corps' Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, notes that, even before being mobilized in the war on terrorism, the National Guard and Reserve were stretched thin with peacekeeping and nation-building responsibilities that they acquired after the Cold War. Hoffman writes that the U.S. government lacks a strategy to guide the integration of all elements of the U.S. armed services, and has not yet fully grasped the fundamental shift in modern war, which has put a great deal of strain on the Guard and Reserves. He proposes a more flexible structure for the Guard and Reserves, with "traditional" war-fighting duties, stability and support operations, and homeland security, and recommends specific troop deployment numbers.

10. NATO'S EVOLVING OPERATIONS

By Adam Kobieracki. NATO Review. <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2004/issue2/english/main.htm>

While the current list of NATO-led operations outside the traditional Euro-Atlantic boundaries is already impressive, there is pressure to take on more, says NATO Assistant Secretary General Adam Kobieracki. He argues that in many ways NATO has become victim of its own success -- with the result that security analysts and even U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan increasingly look to it to help solve many of the world's more intractable problems. There are, however, limits to the alliance's capacity to deploy forces, he says. Clear capability shortfalls have to be met if NATO is to become an effective crisis manager with a rapid reaction capability and global reach, he says. Available on the Internet at www.nato.int/review.

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- U.S. Embassy Jakarta official website <http://jakarta.usembassy.gov>
- American Indonesian Educational Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) <http://www.aminef.or.id>
- USAID Indonesia <http://www.usaid.gov/id>

U.S. SOCIETY AND VALUES

11. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF TOCQUEVILLE

By Bernard-Henri Lévy. Translated by Charlotte Mandell.. The Atlantic Monthly. May 2005 Vol. 295, No. 4, 25 pgs

Commemorating the bicentennial of the birth of Alexis de Tocqueville, the legendary interpreter of America, another Frenchman spent nearly a year traveling from one end of the country to the other to report on what he found. Drawing

comparisons with Tocqueville as he journeys throughout the United States, Lévy reveals many insights into the American psyche from the simple to the profound. While visiting Arab Americans in Detroit, he sees "democracy at work -- that is, of integration and compromise." On the highway, he observes the love of equality. And at the Republican National Convention, he finds an ideological passion virtually unknown in Europe today.

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- Stemming the International Trafficking of Children
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